Return To Forever - Musicmagic (1977)

01. The Musician (Chick Corea) - 7:11 02. Hello Again (Stanley Clarke) - 3:49 03. Musicmagic (Chick Corea, Gayle Moran) - 10:59 04. So Long Mickey Mouse (Stanley Clarke) - 6:08 05. Do You Ever (Gayle Moran) - 3:57 06. The Endless Night (Chick Corea, Gayle Moran) - 9:40 Personnel: - Chick Corea - piano, Fender Rhodes, Mini Moog, clavinet, Polymoog, Moog 15, ARP Odyssey, vocals - Gayle Moran - Hammond organ, polymoog, piano, female vocals - Stanley Clarke - electric & acoustic bass, vocals, co-producer - Joe Farrell - tenor & soprano saxophone, flute, piccolo flute - Gerry Brown - drums - John Thomas - lead trumpet, flugelhorn - James Tinsley - trumpet, piccolo trumpet - Harold Garret - tenor & bass trombone, baritone horn - Jim Pugh - tenor trombone

Return to Forever was one of the most commercially and artistically successful jazz/rock bands of the '70s. Albums like Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy and Where Have I Known You Before are filled with the band's chemistry and deft mix of genres. This 1977 effort marks the departure of founding member, drummer Lenny White and guitarist Al DiMeola. White is replaced here with Gerry Brown. A five-piece horn section is added, which includes the returning Joe Farrell. Gayle Moran also is added as a vocalist and on keyboards. Those expecting a continuation of what the group was working on during the great Romantic Warrior will be disappointed. Musicmagic features none of the exciting and challenging playing that typified their best work. The first track, "The Musician," starts off strongly with a great intro then meanders, a trait that often marred Corea's best work of this era. "Hello Again," a duet with Clarke and Moran, is skilled but a little mawkish. The title track plays to this incarnation's strengths with the horn section providing punchy support as Corea has a harder-edged Fender Rhodes solo. Unfortunately, Musicmagic is more often than not filled with bombast and melodrama typified on "So Long Mickey Mouse" and "Do You Ever." The last track, the melodically compelling "The Endless Night," also has the vocals of Clarke and Moran blending particularly well on the song. Despite the best intentions, Musicmagic lacks the swagger and confidence of the group's best work. --- Jason Elias, Rovi

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